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## ONE SET OF SILVER JEWELRY FROM THE TOMBS OF VANI

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### ABSTRACT

*The article examines several types of silver jewelry unearthed at the Vani site during 2002-2005, which include spherical beads, tubes of various sizes, group of hemispherical items with corrugated surfaces and pyramidal objects.*

*These small silver jewelry items were discovered during archaeological work in burials N22, N24, and N11, concentrated both in the area of the deceased and among other numerous burial inventory.*

*In Burial N22, the silver artefacts were confirmed in a cluster north of the gold-containing jar and among the horse harness assemblage.*

*In Burial N24, similar small silver jewelry, better preserved, were recovered near the main deceased, in one cluster, topped by a gold tube decorated with granulation.*

*In Burial N11, which is earlier and dates to the mid-5th century BC, small silver jewelry was represented in relatively large quantities. A group of tubes and beads was concentrated near the right arm of the main deceased. The tubes were arranged in three rows lengthwise, while the beads were in four rows.*

*In all three burials, the jewelry manufacturing technology is analogous, differing primarily in size. The spherical beads are smooth, slightly elongated along the axis, made by soldering two hemispheres. The silver tubes were formed by circular bending of a sheet so that the ends overlap and are not soldered. The pyramid-shaped pendants have no base, have a hole at the apex, while the edges and corners are decorated with stamped dots.*

*The small silver jewelry found in the Vani burials shows great similarity with the jewelry complex from Sairkhe, which is the earliest and dates to the first half of the 5th century BC. In this burial, silver jewelry was found in the head area of the main deceased, together with a gold diadem, a pair of crescent-shaped earrings, and a sewing plate.*

*The study provides valuable insights in several respects: 1. The arrangement of jewelry*

*within the burials suggests their use in decorating fabric (headdress, mantle) or horse harness; 2. The silver items closely correspond to objects made of other metals (gold, bronze, iron), attesting to a long-standing tradition of jewelry forms (spanning from the 8th century BC to the 3rd century AD); 3. The discoveries once again confirm the accounts of Greco-Roman authors concerning the abundance of silver in the region.*

**KEYWORDS:** VANI SITE, SAIRKHE, BURIALS, JEWELRY, SILVER OBJECTS.

Archaeological excavations in the town of Vani in 2002-2005 have uncovered numerous pieces of gold and other materials, as well as several types of small size silver jewelry. Particularly, heap of silver artefacts were detected to the north of gold items containing Jar in burial N22. From above was placed a golden tube, richly decorated with Tsvara technique (granulation). Two clusters of Colchian trioboles were found there (Fig. 1-2). Unfortunately, the silver items are badly damaged, although pyramidal jewelry, spherical beads, and pipes have been identified. The tubes (inv. N07: 1-03: 1707) were obtained in the form of fragments. The length of the longest fragment reaches – 2.1 cm. A fragment of one bead (inv. N07: 1-03:1708) is preserved (dm – 0.6 cm). The bead was obtained by the soldering of two hemispheres, it is spherical and slightly elongated, 2 whole samples are left (height – 1 cm, width – 1 cm). From the jewelry of the side-shaped pyramid (Inv. N07: 1-03:1709), which has a hole on the top, the rest of other samples are highly fragmented (Fig. 3-5).

In Tomb N22, similar silver jewelry (with the exception of beads) was found in another pile of inventory – a horse harness – but in small quantities (Fig. 6). In particular, pipes (inv. NN07:1-03:1816, 1823) were found near the silver belt in this pile, three of which are whole (length – 4.4 cm, dm – 0.3 cm) and two – fragmentary. A silver wire is selected in one fragment (length of the wire – 2 cm). Here was found a piece of jewelry with a side-shaped pyramid, with a hole on the top (inv. N07:1-03:1817), two pieces, whole (height – 1 cm, width of the trunk – 1 cm) and hemispherical, folded jewelry (inv. N07:1 – 03:1819), three pieces (height – 1.2 cm, dm – 2 cm, Fig. 3, 5-6). the last one is damaged. As it seems, they were attached to the edges of the silver belt with the silver and bronze miniature bells and glass and glassy glasslike beads. In addition, the silver barrel is adorned with hemispherical jewelry. It is noteworthy that among the gold jewelry found in the same tomb N22, the grooved hemispherical jewelry was also confirmed – 4 pieces (10; p. 69, tab. III, 16; inv. N 07: 1-03: 1677, 1678 and 1681, mus. NN31-2006 / 44, 45, 47, Fig. 7). It seems that such thin jewelry was made not only of silver but also of gold.

Silver jewelry similar to the one we discussed above was found in Tomb N24 in much better condition. At that time silver jewelry was observed in the area of the main corpse, at its eastern edge, in a single pile (Fig. 8-9). On the top of the silver jewelry there was a golden tube, decorated with Tsvara technology, similar to the one found in tomb N22. A similar gold pipe was found in the area of the main corpse at the level of the, they were decorating the shroud.

The pile consisted of pipes, spherical plain beads, grooved hemispheres, and pyramidal jewelry; nearby was found paste minute beads. The following alternations of them were observed: pipe, two paste minute beads, spherical bead, two paste minute beads pipe, and so

on (Fig. 11). Similar silver pipes, spherical beads, groomed hemispheres, and pyramidal jewelry were also found in small quantities in the area of the main corpse. In particular, a series of alternating pipes and spherical beads, as well as Paste beads, passed over the silver vase (Fig. 10) and joined the pyramidal jewelry; Pyramidal jewelry was found on both the right (one) and left wrist area (five pieces).

Spherical beads of tomb N24 (Inv. N07:1-04: 642, 1858, 1928, Mus. N13-2007:45), which are also slightly elongated along the axis, are plain; was obtained by the soldering of two hemispheres. The diameter of the beads is 0.4 cm (Fig. 12). There are preserved 89 whole beads and fragments. The length of modern casting of more or less whole beads is 1.46 m. The silver pipes from the same tomb are obtained (inv. N07:1-04: 612, 641, 1404, 1540, 1658, 1857, 1928, 2296, mus. N13-2007:44) by circular bending of the plate in the way that the ends of it are crossed over each other was not obtained by the soldering of two hemispheres, but they are smaller than the pipes in tomb N22. Their maximum length reaches 2.5 cm, minimum – 1 cm, and their diameter varies between 0.3 cm and 0.15 cm (Fig. 13). The length of modern casting of more or less whole patterns reached 3.80 m.

Concave sided Pyramid-type silver jewelry (N07:1-04:1404, 1859, 1668, 2065) 10 is preserved in the form of whole patterns and fragments. Their height is 0.6-0.7 cm (Fig. 14). As for the grooved hemisphere face jewelry (N07:1-04:1541), It is represented by only one or more whole patterns (height – 1 cm, dm – 1.6 cm) and several fragments (Fig. 15). The type of abovementioned silver jewelry was also found in tomb N11, in Vani, which is from the earlier period. It dates back to the middle of the 5th century BC. Thin silver jewelry was found in large quantities in this tomb, with a wider assortment and well-preserved. These are spherical beads (more than 2000 pieces), pipes of different sizes, with notches and with wire-decorated ends (approx. 1300 pieces); Various hemispherical jewelry (392 pcs.), most of which (353 pcs.) are grooved surface; Pyramidal jewelry (35 pieces), bipyramidal jewelry (54 pieces), hangers with wild pig image (5 pieces) – Inv. NN10-975:74-85). Our areas of interest include beads, plain tubes, hemispherical and pyramidal jewelry. The beads are spherical in shape, slightly elongated on the axis; obtained by the soldering of two hemispheres (axis length 0.8 cm, dm – 0.7 cm; inv. N10-975: 74, Fig. 16). The tubes come in two different sizes. The length of one group is 1.5-1.7 cm, dm – 0.20-0.25 cm. The length of the second larger pipes is 2.3-2.5 cm, dm – 0.3 cm (inv. N10-975:75, Fig. 17). The pipes of both groups are obtained by circular folding of the plate, the edges of which are not soldered with each other and pass over each other. Many hemispherical jewels with a hole in the middle are found in the same tomb, which are presented in two variants: 1. grooved body, hemispherical, with three different embossed ornament (8, 9 or 10 grooves; height – 6.7mm, dm – 10.5-12mm, Inv. #10-975:79, Fig. 18); 2. Slightly flattened grooved body pendant, with 12-13 grooves. Most of them have a circle around the hole, which is surrounded by embossed points. There are dots directly on the hole (height – 8-9 mm, dm – 17-18 mm. N10-975: 80, Pict. 19). Pyramid-shaped hangers were also found in tomb N11 among the silver jewelry. The pyramid has no base, there is a hole at its tip; The edges and faces of it are decorated with embossed points (height – 9 mm, page width – 24-25 mm. N 10-975: 85, Fig. 20). The jewelry discussed above was only confirmed in the area of the main corpse.

It is noteworthy that near the right arm of the main corpse was concentrated one group of pipes and beads (inv. N10-975:78), which confirms a certain alternation of pipes and beads.

In particular, the pipes were arranged in three rows in length, and the beads in four rows. The length of the pipes is 5.6 cm, dm – 0.4 cm. As in all the cases mentioned earlier, the pipes are obtained by circular folding of the plate; The edges move over each other, it isn't soldered (Fig. 21). The beads are spherical, slightly elongated on the axis; obtained by the soldering of two hemispheres. The length of the axis of the beads is 1.0 cm, dm – 0.9 cm (Fig. 22). Apparently we are dealing with a similar case of the silver jewelry of tomb N 24.

It is almost of the same composition, only the elements of the concave sided pyramids are missing, a set of silver jewelry from the tomb of Sairkhe, namely tomb N13, which is one of the earliest and most luxurious tombs discovered here – belongs to the first half of the 5th century BC. Silver jewelry was found on the head of the main corpse, with a gold tiara, a pair of beam earrings and a sewing plate. Thus, this time the function of this jewelry is clear – they decorate the headscarf. An Arrangement of them is also certain: There are a pipe on the four layers thread, followed by glasslike paste three minute beads, a silver bead, then glasslike paste three minute beads and a pipe, and so this sequence is repeated. Several such spills are joined by hemispherical ends. Remains of fabric are preserved, which may be a sign that castings were sewn onto the fabric. As mentioned above, similar alternation of elements in the casting of silver jewelry was confirmed in Vani tomb N22 and N24.

Thus, based on the materials obtained in Sairkhe, it should be said that even in the case of Vani N22 and N24 tombs, we are dealing with a headscarf or a mantle.

Here we should mention once more, one of the most recent excavations in Vani: The silver belt of tomb N 22 shows that the pipes and the hemispherical jewelry with a grooved surface were used for another function – to decorate the silver belt of the horse.

It should also be noted that the types of silver jewelry described above finds analogies with contemporary gold jewelry, although such analogies are relatively rare, much less proven, and mostly found in an earlier context. In particular, in Tomb N11, 10 tubes of gold were found on the chest of a third corpse, with a single pile of 16 spherical beads and one of the bipyramidal jewelry. The tubes are plain, obtained by circular folding of the plate, the edges are crossed, it isn't soldered. Their length is 1.6-1.8 cm, dm – 0.2 cm. A bipyramidal hanger is obtained by joining two pyramids together; There are holes along the axes, around which are twisted wire (length of the axes – 0.9 cm and 1.1 cm); The beads are plain, spherical (dm – 0.45 cm, axis length – 0.5 cm). It is also noteworthy that the only gold pyramidal jewelry in tomb N11 finds an analogy with the silver bipyramid jewelry of the same tomb, the number of which is much larger. As already mentioned, the analogies of the silver jewelry discussed above, made of gold, were also confirmed among the gold jewelry placed in jar in tomb N22 in Vani. This is the grooved hemispherical jewelry.

The analogies of the silver jewelry which are made of bronze, are also proven in the Vani, but in extremely small quantities. It should be noted that such bronze jewelry is very rare in Eastern Georgia. In particular, such items were found on nearby “Kasraantmitsa” and “Dachrilebi's” burial mounds (Kavtiskhevi Municipality). The first of them is the 30 burial mounds which is dated back to the VI-IV centuries BC. It contains only one thing from our interest sphere. In particular, bronze jewelry was found in tomb N24, which is described in the publication as a “button, star-shaped, pierced in the middle” and corresponds to the jewelry in the shape of a concave sided pyramid of our description. As for the “Dachrilebis” cemetery, which is generally

dating back to the IV-III centuries BC. Bronze jewelry, which is the subject of our interest, was found in only 2 of the 25 tombs excavated here. Both of them are children burial. The jewelry found in tomb N6 (1 piece) is also pyramidal, concave sided. It is considered to be a button. The exact location of its discovery is not specified in the publication. In tomb N14 (child) the inventory was buried along with the bones on the north side of the pitcher. The inventory included one such bronze piece of jewelry („rectangular, notched, pierced in the middle“), this time with a hanger. The jewels in the shape of a concave sided pyramid have been confirmed on another monument – namely, in a tomb accidentally discovered in the Upper Gostibe, which dates back to VI-IV centuries BC. According to the excavators, these are fragments of bronze star-like “buttons” that have a hole at the point where ridges connect.

To say briefly, the types of silver jewelry discussed above are different. It was also made of metal in the Pre-antique period. In particular, gold spherical beads, tubes, grooved hemisphere-shaped jewelry have been proven concave sided pyramidal species made of gold have not been found so far, although bronze specimens are known.

It is very interesting that the two types of silver jewelry discussed above are also confirmed in earlier monuments, but all of them are made of bronze. Thus, in our description, the concave sided pyramidal jewelry made of bronze is found in eastern Georgia, in Trialeti, Maralderesi cemetery, which belongs to Vani era (VIII-VII centuries BC). This is a four-sided seam with a hole in the middle. From the prehistoric tombs of Samtavro N11(1938), as A. Kalandadze says it belongs to the XI-VI centuries BC. 7 pieces of “Rossete” was confirmed there too; In tomb N 38 of the same cemetery, which R. Abramishvili belongs to the first half of the VIII-VII BC a bronze rosette in the shape of a concave sided pyramid is found. It is noteworthy that bronze rosette was also found in the tomb N215 of Samtavro (stone box), which belongs to the Adreantic era. In the tomb N13 of Tsikhediskhevi near Mtskheta, bronze jewelry of a concave sided pyramid was found. It should also be noted that the excavators says that the tomb belongs to the second half of the second millennium BC. However, the specialists say that buckle found in this tomb belongs to a later period. In particular, L. Pantskhava dates it back – VIII-VII centuries. Similar jewelry has been found in Lower Kartli, on the cemetery, which was belonged to the first half of the first millennium BC. Such jewelry is also known from Bornigele N32 tomb, which is dated back to the VIII-VI centuries BC., as well as from the Madnischala cemetery. This type of larger size bronze jewelry, was found in Knole Cemetery, which belongs to the VII-VI centuries BC. It is noteworthy that in recent times two that kind of iron jewelry have been excavated near the station of Marabda cemetery which is dated back to the VIII-VI centuries BC (Information from the excavator of the monument Guram Kvirkvelia, for which I thank him). It is noteworthy that the only such jewelry was found in Tlia Cemetery. It was found in tomb N74a. It is dated back XII-X centuries BC by B. Tekhov (30; p. 22, Tab. 52, 6).

The abovementioned jewelry is also confirmed in prehistoric complexes in Western Georgia. In particular, concave sided jewelry made of bronze was found in the tomb of Tsiteli Shuqura N21 (23) which was belonged to the VIII-VI centuries BC, by excavator and the jewelry was considered as hanger. Similar bronze jewelry was found on Eshera city site, in a damaged tomb.

A hemispherical bronze grooved piece of jewelry (“Rossete“) is found on the Narekvavi cemetery, which belongs to the VIII-VII centuries BC, in both tomb, in particular in 29th tomb, as well as among the occasional findings. Such kind of 28 jewelries (Mus. N14-54:5017) are

called “Rossete” by R. Abramishvili from the tomb N191 of the Samtavro cemetery, which was belonged to the second half of VII century BC. One hemispherical piece of jewelry was also found in the Dmanisi cemetery, which was dated back to XI-X centuries BC by G. Nioradze.

It is noteworthy that one or two specimens of the abovementioned jewelry are also found in pre-Roman times. For example, in Tsitsamuri cemetery of II-I centuries AD, tomb N14, there is explored a bronze “Rossete”, rectangular, twisted, with a hole to fasten the clothes” on the chest area of the corpse, this is the concave sided pyramidal jewelry of our description. And in western Georgia on the Dzevri cemetery, which was dated back to the II-I centuries AD, three pieces of bronze were found in a tomb, corrugated, similar to Vani hemispherical grooved jewelry.

The purpose of hemispherical and pyramidal jewelry at this early stage of their production (VII-VII centuries BC) is not well defined. Excavators sometimes call them stitches, sometimes “Rossete” or hangers, or buttons. As for the early antiquity period, based on the Sairkh data, we should think that small pieces of silver jewelry in the form of spherical beads and pipes together with pastelike mass minute beads were sewn on fabric (mantle, headscarf), and hemispherical and pyramidal jewelry were used to attach beads.

It is worth to mention that in tomb N22 there was a gold pipe on a pile of silver items, ending with beads on both sides; Enlargement on one side is followed by two ridges (Fig. 25). This item is richly decorated with granular geometric shapes: The tube itself is completely covered with triangles, the bead-shaped enlargements are adorned with rows of tsvara, and the ridges are decorated with triangles. Such pipes were also found in tomb N24: One pipe was placed on a pile of small silver items, and two of them were found in the area of the main corpse at the level of beads that adorned the shroud. Except Vani, that kind of pipe is known from the tomb of Sairkhe N8, which dated back to the middle period of IV century BC. The purpose of these tubes is unclear. However, their location in Vani tombs allows us to find connections with tiny silver jewelry embellishment.

The materials discussed above confirm the popularity of certain types of fine jewelry grooved hemispheres, concave sided pyramids over a long period of time. Continuity lasts for several centuries.

The systematic character of silver jewelry as well as gold was revealed. The gold jewelry of the honorees is usually presented in the form of a whole set. This set includes: Combined jewelry (consisting of a tiara, and / or forehead jewelry, and / or a central bracelet, blades, earrings, sewing plates), necklaces, bracelets, signet-rings. As for the silver personal jewelry set of the elite, that kind of thing has not been confirmed on our monuments yet. From personal jewelry only tiaras, necklaces, bracelets, and rings were made of silver; Earrings are very rare, there are no silver earrings and necklaces. It should also be noted here that a silver tiara on the head of the main corpse has not been confirmed yet, although there is a known case where a silver tiara was placed on the chest of the main corpse (e.g., in Sairkhe N13 tomb. There is one well-known case in Vani (Tomb N6) where a representative of the elite, who is buried without accompanying persons, has a silver tiara with him. The silver tiara was usually worn by the persons who were buried with the elite representative (for example, in tombs N5 and 13 in Sairkhe); The second corpse was found with two silver tiaras in the tomb of Vani N11, and only one in the third.

Three of the seven accompanying persons buried in Vani Tomb N12 were found to have a silver neck ring (two of these are published as bronze, but a restoration-refinement operation in 2017 revealed that they were made of silver); In tomb N16, where the number of burials could not be determined and the main corpse could not be identified, silver and bronze Torques. In collective tomb N22, where the main corpse is not identified, a silver neck ring was worn by 3 out of 5 corpses (N1, 4 and 5), and in tomb N24, where the main corpse is easily identifiable by its central location and luxurious burial inventory, a silver bearing ring was worn by 4 corpses. So the silver tiaras and neck rings in Vani usually belong to the persons accompanying the main corpse as the silver neck rings on Sairkhe cemetery – The first and second companions of N5 burial. The silver neck ring was found in several individual tombs belonged to a non-elite representative: in particular, in Modinakhe cemetery, tomb N3 and in Shromisubani, tomb N2. There is an opinion that the neck rings must be indicator of their status.

Silver bracelets are often worn by both the accompanying persons and the main corpse. For example, a silver bracelet was found in Sairkhe on the main corpse in tomb N8 and on accompanying person in tombs N5, 10 and 13, in tomb N3 (woman), in Vani – silver bracelets (along with bronze and iron bracelets) were found, the main body of tomb N9 had three silver bracelets, the child buried in tomb N10 – one, the second corpse in tomb N12 – one, and the third corpse (co-buried) in tomb N11 – five. 5 of the 27 bracelets found in tomb N16 were silver; in tomb N19, where one individual was buried, only silver (and iron) bracelets were found, in tomb N22 – 2 co-buried (N2 and 3) had silver bracelets.

As for the silver rings in Vani, they were found in the following tombs – in tomb N9, the main corpse was found with two silver signet-rings, in tomb N10 – a child with one silver signet-rings, in tomb N16, one silver seal was found, in N19, in an individual tomb, which dates back to the second half of IV century BC. Two silver signet-rings were found; In tomb N24 the main corpse and co-buried has silver seal. A silver-signet ring was also found on the main body of Sairkhe in tomb N8.

Silver earrings are found, though much rarer than other types of jewelry. In particular, silver earrings were found in tomb N24 in Vani (with co-conspirators). In tomb N22 the corpse N5 had a silver ring as well, it was also confirmed in tomb N28. We should underline the discovery of silver crescent shape plate-like earrings in tomb N23 in Vani.

Finally, in addition to the listed types of personal jewelry, small pieces of jewelry were made from silver – which is the object of our interest, is indicated to adorn the fabric. It has already been mentioned that usually this jewelry repeats the shape of the same type of gold patterns. It should also be noted that silver jewelry is usually found only in the tombs where the elite people were buried.

It can also be said that the newly obtained materials prove once again that Colchis was not only rich in gold but also in silver. It is not coincidence that the wealth of the country is also confirmed by Greco-Roman. For example, Strabo and Pliny. Data from tomb N11 still allowed us to talk about the quantity of silver jewelry – it contained more than 5,000 pieces of silver jewelry.

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## DESCRIPTION OF TABS:

- Tomb N22, General View.
- Tomb N22, a pile of silver jewelry.
- Tomb N22, silver jewelry – tubular, pyramidal, hemispherical.
- Tomb N22, silver jewelry – pyramidal.
- Tomb N22, silver jewelry – worn hemispheres.
- Tomb N22, a pile of horse harness.
- Tomb N22, gold jewelry – worn hemispheres.
- Tomb N24, General View.
- Tomb N24, the area of the main deceased.
- Tomb N24, silver vase and fine jewelry.
- Tomb N24, a pile of silver jewelry.
- Tomb N24, silver beads.
- 13. Tomb N24, silver pipes.
- Tomb N24, silver pyramidal jewelry.
- Tomb N24, silver hemispherical jewelry.

Tomb N11, silver beads.  
 Tomb N11, silver pipes.  
 Tomb N11, silver hemispherical jewelry, worn.  
 Tomb N11, silver hemispherical jewelry, worned and ornamented.  
 Tomb N11, silver pyramidal jewelry.  
 Tomb N11, silver pipes.  
 Tomb N11, silver beads.  
 23. Tomb N11, Gold Necklace.  
 Tomb N11, silver bipyramidal jewelry.  
 Tomb N22, Gold Jewelry.

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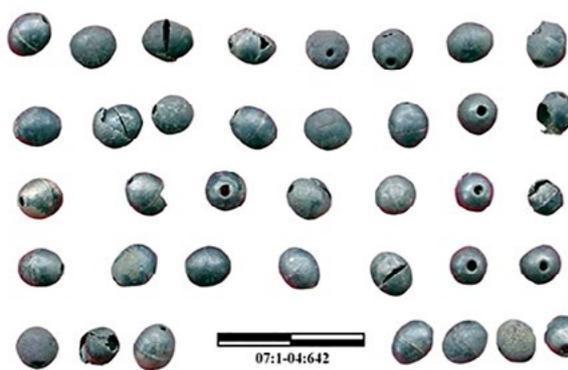
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